

Date: July 1, 2008

To: Region 10 Brownfields and Land Revitalization Community

Re: Region 10 Competitiveness in ARC Grant Competition

This year the Region 10 Brownfields Team has a goal for 2009 Assessment, RLF, Cleanup (ARC) Grants – More competitive proposals from Region 10. Like many of you, we were disappointed by the outcome for ARC 2008 proposals from our region. As a team we began discussions about the 2008 ARC grant cycle soon after the results were announced.

Those of you attending Brownfields 2008 in Detroit had the opportunity to discuss the ARC 2008 Grant process in the open house hosted by EPA Regional Administrator Elin Miller. Several of you expressed frustration and asked if the process was biased to favor urban areas over rural areas and Eastern states with a legacy of industrial brownfields over Western states.

We've been working to answer the core questions you posed in Detroit. Here's what we found.

- Is there bias in the selection process that favors other regions or urban areas? No.
- Can Region 10 proposals be more competitive? Yes.

These short answers are the quick summary to the commitment Regional Administrator Miller made in Detroit. She asked the region's Brownfields Team to review national data and its 2008 proposals to address the perception of bias and reasons why the proposals from the region were not more successful. She committed the Brownfields Team to reporting back to the Region 10 Brownfields and Land Revitalization Community by July 1, 2008.

The Big Picture

Nationally, EPA grants for brownfields assessments and cleanups have become increasingly competitive. There is growing sophistication and skill in many communities that are addressing land revitalization through cleanup and re-use of once-contaminated brownfield properties.

Many regions outside the West have seen an increase in grant applications. Applications from Region 10 have declined, resulting in a smaller pool of proposals. And the trend has been for those remaining proposals to be less competitive.

The Region 10 Brownfields Team focuses on both the current year grant cycle as well as creating capacity and interest in public, nonprofit and private organizations to address land revitalization that supports local community development. As a team we are committed to assisting communities across the region to identify and compete successfully for resources to assess potential brownfield sites and to cleanup and re-use contaminated land. Serving communities and restoring land is the core of our work.

Research and Analysis on the Questions of Bias

In our analysis of national data provided by the EPA Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization, we found no evidence of disproportionate representation of urban compared to rural areas. The analysis did find more grants awarded to Midwestern and Eastern regions, however the number of proposals from those areas has been growing, while the applications from Western states have been declining.

Of special concern to our state partners was the question of bias against state agency assessment proposals. The analysis showed no bias. Approximately 1.5% of the total number of

FY 08 proposals came from state agencies and two thirds were selected for funding.

Analyzing the Ranking Panel Members Scores and Comments

The ARC national selection guidelines require each proposal be reviewed and ranked by a panel of three federal employees from EPA Headquarters and regions outside the applicant's region. All reviewers have varied professional backgrounds and are knowledgeable about the Brownfields program. They are unlikely to know details about communities or proposed brownfields projects outside their home region. (In the 2008 process Region 10 read and ranked 46 proposals from other regions.)

The Region 10 Brownfields Team analyzed the reviewers' evaluation scores and comments on the 24 proposals from Region 10. We found no patterns of bias or failure to follow the selection guidelines.

We also reviewed the Region 10 proposals to determine if there were areas within the proposals with a pattern of less competitive scores. We found some ranking areas where several Region 10 proposals consistently failed to get competitive scores. One of the most significant was the inability to write a succinct compelling narrative to profile a target community and the potential impact of the grant on the people most affected by a brownfields site. We're focusing on these areas in preparing training material for the 2009 grant applicants.

The attached one page fact sheet summarizes our analysis of the ARC 2008 process.

Our Goal for 2009 ARC Grants – More Applicants Submitting Competitive Proposals

The Region 10 Brownfields Team is committed to increasing the competitive quality of ARC Grant proposals submitted from Region 10. We're encouraging past applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, to read the significantly revised 2009 ARC Guidelines to see if these grants may be a match for funding a current project. We're talking with our partner state agencies and tribes to identify other potential applicants, and we are targeting other organizational networks (nonprofits, associations of cities and counties, economic development authorities, and other units of governments) to spread the word about the 2009 ARC Grant cycle. We'll support those who choose to compete in 2009 with orientation and training delivered in conference calls, online seminars and public presentations. Again, our goal is more proposals that are competitive in the national pool of proposals. Call us. Email us. Let us know if you're thinking about applying for a 2009 ARC grant.

Here's What We Have Planned – We're Expecting Guidelines By Mid-August

This is the current schedule for orientation and training events. Check the website for updates.

July

Outreach to past grant applicants – phone and email

Brownfields Introduction, Eugene, OR – July 23

National Brownfield Association (NBA) Training, Bandon, OR – July 24

Brownfields Introduction, Boise, ID, July 29

Brownfields Introduction, Sandpoint, ID July 30

August

Outreach to past grant applicants – phone and email

Weekly - Conference Calls/Online Seminars

September

Outreach to past grant applicants
Brownfields Introduction, Washington TBA
Brownfields Introduction, Washington TBA
Weekly - Conference Calls/Online Seminars

October

Western Brownfields Workshop, San Diego, CA – October 8-10
Washington State Brownfield Conference, Tacoma, WA – October 21-22
Conference Call – Last minute questions and answers

The Region 10 Brownfields Team

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